UNITED NATIONS

# Daily Highlights

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## TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- WFP says 150,000 people in Bihac pocket face serious food shortages; fighting escalates in Velika Kladusa as Croatian Serbs continue cross-border shelling.

- United Nations, OAS and Haitian Government launch appeal for $77 million to provide humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for Haiti.

- United Nations seeks $42 million to meet emergency humanitarian needs of 600,000 people affected by conflict in Tajikistan.

- General Assembly discusses developments relating to United Nations Law of Sea Convention; Fiji says new legal regime reflects aspirations of all members of international community.

- Administrative and Budgetary Committee approves draft decisions which would authorize Secretary-General to commit $248 million to maintain UNPROFOR, UNOSOM II and UNDOF to end of year.

- General Assembly to launch Decade of World's Indigenous People on Thursday; indigenous representatives from around world to address meeting.

- United Nations Centre for Human Rights and DPI to host special event on Friday to commemorate upcoming Decade for Human Rights Education.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that over 150,000 people are facing serious food shortages as a result of the fighting in the Bihac pocket. They have been effectively cut off from food aid for over five months, and only two convoys carrying WFP-supplied food have reached the pocket in that time. The Programme is pre-positioning an emergency supply of 100 tonnes of high-energy biscuits in Zagreb, which will be transported into the pocket as soon as convoys are given clearance.

Fighting for control of the town of Velika Kladusa in the Bihac pocket escalated yesterday and again today, according to a United Nations spokesman. He noted the continued use of tanks, heavy artillery and mortars from across

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the border in Croatia, and added that incendiary shells had been fired into areas controlled by the Bosnian Government.

Meanwhile, United Nations military observers patrolling the edge of the Gorazde exclusion zone came under direct small-arms fire from Bosnian Serb positions. The observers, who were unarmed, were pinned down for three hours, but managed to withdraw without suffering any casualties.

The spokesman expressed concern regarding the situation of a group of United Nations military observers detained by Bosnian Serb forces at Banja Luka airport. One observer, a Jordanian major, has a serious heart condition, but the Bosnian Serbs said they would only permit a medical evacuation if the United Nations provided a replacement hostage. Two military observers went to Banja Luka -- one to replace the Jordanian major and one to drive the evacuation vehicle -- but both were seized. Condemning the violation of the evacuation agreement and the blatantly inhumane treatment of the seriously ill observer, the spokesman stressed that those responsible would be held accountable for their actions.

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The Haitian Government, the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) today launched an appeal for $77 million for humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Haiti. The appeal, which covers a six-month period, differs from traditional consolidated interagency appeals in that it seeks to alleviate the suffering of the poor while helping to revive Government capacity. It underlines the overriding importance of socio-economic revival for political stability in Haiti.

The appeal was prepared jointly by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in close consultation with the Government of Haiti, donors, United Nations programmes and agencies, and non-governmental organizations. It is being launched simultaneously at the office of Prime Minister Smarck Michel in Port-au-Prince and at OAS headquarters in Washington, D.C. The United Nations system is represented in Washington by Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, and in Port-au-Prince by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Peter Hansen.

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The United Nations today launched a consolidated inter-agency appeal for $42 million to meet the emergency humanitarian needs of some 600,000 people affected by the civil conflict in Tajikistan. The appeal, which covers 1995, targets pensioners, invalids and widows with children -- many of whom are returnees and internally displaced persons -- for emergency food aid.

The appeal is the result of extensive efforts by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs coordinator in Tajikistan and the Field Coordination Unit established in Dushanbe this year, as well as by the inter-agency mission which visited the country in October. Despite signs of improvement in conflict-affected areas, the deterioration of the Tajik economy has severely

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affected the living conditions of the entire population, and could lead to emergency situations around the country.

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The General Assembly met today to consider developments regarding the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which entered into force on 16 November. Introducing a draft resolution on the Convention, the representative of Fiji said the legal regime established by it reflected the aspirations of all members of the international community. The Convention had already become a cornerstone for the conduct of relations among States on maritime issues, he added.

The draft introduced today would have the Assembly call on all States to become parties to the Convention and the Agreement on implementation of Part XI -- relating to deep seabed mining provisions -- in order to achieve universal participation. While reaffirming the unified character of the Convention, the Assembly would call on States to harmonize their national legislation with its provisions and to ensure their consistent application.

The representative of the United States said that while lack of consensus regarding mineral resources of the deep seabed had threatened wide acceptance of the treaty, the conclusion of the Agreement on Part XI had opened the way for its universal acceptance. It was important for the International Seabed Authority to launch its work in a cost-effective and efficient fashion, consistent with the evolutionary approach that had been agreed upon.

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The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) has approved draft decisions by which the General Assembly would authorize the Secretary-General to commit up to $248 million gross to maintain three peace-keeping operations up to the end of the year. Approved yesterday without a vote, the drafts would provide $140 million for the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) for December; some $106 million for the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) for November and December; and $2.7 million for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) for December.

The drafts were approved after the United Nations Controller, Yukio Takasu, explained the urgent need for action to maintain the missions whose financial authority had recently expired. The action was taken pending the Fifth Committee's review of the reports on those missions from the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

Also yesterday, the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, Karl Theodor Paschke, said he would help the Secretary-General change the Organization's management culture and promote the concept of value for money. In his first appearance before the Fifth Committee since taking

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office last month, he said he would serve as "a bit of an auditor, a bit of a controller, a bit of an evaluator, a bit of an inspector and monitor, and a bit of an investigator".

Mr. Paschke went on to say that he would strengthen cooperation between the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Board of Auditors and the Joint Inspection Unit in the audit function. The Office's new investigation unit had installed procedures for getting confidential information, he added.

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The General Assembly will launch the Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004) at a special ceremony on 8 December. Among those participating in the ceremony will be Jose Ayala Lasso, High Commissioner for Human Rights; Ibrahima Fall, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Coordinator of the Decade; and Erika-Irene Daes, Chairman of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. Indigenous representatives from around the world will also address the meeting.

The theme for the Decade, which was proclaimed by the Assembly last December, is "Indigenous people: a new relationship -- partnership in action". The Decade constitutes a time-frame for the United Nations, governments and non-governmental organizations to give priority to the role of indigenous people as decision makers and beneficiaries of development activities.

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The United Nations Centre for Human Rights and the Department of Public Information (DPI) will host a special event to commemorate the upcoming International Decade for Human Rights Education in the Economic and Social Council Chamber on 9 December. The event will also observe Human Rights Day, 10 December.

The General Assembly is expected to proclaim the Decade later this month. For almost 50 years, the United Nations has promoted respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms by setting standards, strengthening human rights institutions and facilitating international dialogue and cooperation. In that regard, the Organization recognizes the importance of education and dissemination of information aimed at creating a universal culture of human rights.

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